

**CALFED Ops Group --  
1995 Operation Decisions**

The CALFED Ops Group is charged with coordinating the operation of the Central Valley Project and the State Water Project to achieve endangered species, water quality, and CVPIA requirements most efficiently and effectively.

Ops Group meetings began in August of 1994 and consisted of representatives of the CALFED agencies. The CALFED agencies are the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Agency, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, National Marine Fisheries Agency, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, California Department of Water Resources, California Department of Fish and Game, and staff of the State Water Resources Control Board. The Ops Group was given additional emphasis with the signing of the Bay-Delta Principles for Agreement on December 15, 1994. Beginning the following January, the meetings were opened to include representatives of interested constituency groups (stakeholders).

The following discussion summarizes the operation actions taken by the Ops Group in 1995 and describes how these actions helped to define the Ops Group decision-making process. In addition to this summary, a discussion of the Ops Group authority and decision-making process is contained in "The CALFED Ops Group Responsibilities and Decision-making Process" and a description of the 1995 Real-time Fish Monitoring Program has been done by the Interagency Ecological Program.

**Improvements for San Joaquin salmon smolt survival.**

In March, a proposal was made by fishery interests to attempt to improve 1995 San Joaquin River salmon smolt survival by reducing exports at the CVP and SWP pumps during a proposed pulse flow in the San Joaquin River. A group consisting of CVP and SWP operators, fishery representatives, and representatives of water projects on the San Joaquin tributaries met on April 12 to discuss the feasibility of the proposal. Concerns were expressed about the potential costs of energy foregone due to spilling at the tributary reservoirs to create the pulse flow; potential water supply reduction of the CVP and the SWP due to export curtailments; and the potential to aggravate flood conditions in the lower San Joaquin River due to the pulse flow. After evaluating the concerns, the group decided to proceed with the operational modification.

The group decided to use the ratio of San Joaquin River flow to Delta exports (the total of CVP and SWP exports) as the guide for the operation. It was concluded that a 5:1 ratio of San Joaquin River flow to exports would be the objective. The parties

agreed to discuss their issues with their management and closely coordinate to try to implement an operations plan by April 15.

SWP operators felt if the wet conditions held, there would be a small risk of any decrease to the project's water supply due to export reductions at Banks Pumping Plant (the SWP Delta export facility). However, if conditions turned dry and resulted in decreased flows and increased water demands, there could be an impact to SWP water supply that would have to be recovered later in the year. CVP operators were concerned about an unrecoverable impact to their project's water supply because the CVP export facility, Tracy Pumping Plant, has substantially less pumping capacity and, therefore, very little capability to make up lost pumping later in the year. The decision was made to proceed with an operation that targeted the 5:1 ratio and incorporated the strategy that the SWP exports would be reduced the most with the CVP exports being adjusted as necessary to reach the target ratio. The participants of the original group were notified of the decision and other members of the Ops Group were informed by their representatives. During the period of concern, April 15 through May 15, the ratio averaged 5.2:1.

In order to help the CVP make up any losses to its water supply resulting from the export reduction, the possibility of pumping for the CVP at Banks Pumping Plant was explored. The Ops Group discussed the issue and was in favor of proceeding. Confirmation regarding the legality of this action was requested and received from the State Water Resources Control Board. Due to wet conditions continuing through late spring, no reduction in CVP water supplies resulted and no pumping for the CVP at Banks Pumping Plant was required.

### **Protection for Splittail**

A second pumping curtailment operation was coordinated through the Ops Group in June. The action was taken in an attempt to reduce the number of splittail recovered at the fish salvage facilities of the CVP and SWP pumping plants. This operation was guided by information provided by the Real-time Fish Monitoring Program. "Real-time" means that data obtained in the field is provided as information to the CALFED Ops Group within 48 hours. A test of the first Real-time Fish Monitoring Program was conducted by the Interagency Ecological Program in May and June of 1995 to assess the feasibility of protecting chinook salmon, delta smelt, splittail, longfin smelt and other species from the operation of Delta export facilities.

Splittail began being salvaged at the fish facilities at the end of May. By June 4, the daily estimated salvage had exceeded 440,000 fish. The Data Summary Team, a data-analysis group of the Real-time Fish Monitoring Program, met on June 6 to evaluate the available data and develop a recommendation for operational changes.

The discussions continued through June 8 with members of a core coordination group (the "No-Name Group") and other stakeholders. Although salvage of splittail continued at record high levels, data from real-time monitoring suggested that a huge population existed. As a result of this information, significant export curtailments were not pursued. However, it was agreed that a short-term curtailment might yield valuable information on how changes in export levels affect salvage of splittail. Exports were curtailed by about 5,000 cfs for three days beginning on June 11. To avoid the possibility of increased salvage of splittail due to higher pumping levels required to recover the pumping lost during the test, SWP operators agreed to delay recovery until after June, when essentially all splittail had left the southern Delta.

### Summary

These two occurrences helped to define the Ops Group decision-making process. These operational decisions were required to be made within a period of a few days. Many other decisions may allow even less time, so there is pressure to resolve issues quickly. The Ops Group is the primary forum for addressing issues raised by regulatory and resource management agencies and exploring ways to improve fish conditions without significantly impacting CVP and SWP water supply. It cannot, however, appropriate the regulatory and resource management agencies' authority.

In order to be timely and assure the Ops Group is not overextending its authority, decision-making begins at the lowest level but is elevated quickly if there are unresolved issues. A description of the decision-making process which evolved during the operation for San Joaquin salmon and splittail is described below and has been accepted as the process to be used for future actions.

A sub-group (a working-level group which analyzes data) proposes a change in operations to the CVP/SWP operators. After the operators discuss the proposal and its potential to decrease CVP or SWP water supply with their management and possibly revise the proposal, in coordination with the sub-group, a decision regarding proposal implementation is made. If a decision is made to proceed with the proposal, the operation begins. The No-Name Group, consisting of representatives of each CALFED agency and interested parties, is notified of the decision. No-Name Group participants are on-call to respond quickly to operational conditions and, in addition to overseeing operation modifications, are responsible for ensuring their represented parties are adequately informed of the current issue. If any participant in the No-Name Group objects to the decision, the No-Name group is convened and the operation is evaluated. If, upon consensus of the CALFED agency representatives to the No-Name Group, a revised operation is developed, the revised operation will be implemented or the action currently underway will be modified and the Ops Group will be informed. If

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no consensus is reached in the No-Name Group, the issue is raised to the Ops Group. The Ops Group will evaluate the situation. If, upon consensus of the CALFED agency representatives to the Ops Group, a revised operation is developed, the operation will be implemented or the action currently underway will be modified. If no consensus is reached among the CALFED representatives, the issue is raised to the CALFED policy group for resolution.